

# **Cultural Policy**

ACTU Congress September 1991

## **1. Preamble**

1.1 Successful democracies need four common qualities: productive and inventive economies; highly skilled and well educated work forces; highly developed social security systems and high levels of cultural involvement. Cultural involvement is a critical and supportive element to the other three qualities.

1.2 A culturally democratic society is needed to realise the full creative potential of people in their education, work and leisure.

1.3 Unions seek to strongly encourage artistic, cultural and creative recreation, from the simplest forms to the most profound and demanding, so that daily life elevates social usefulness and egalitarian values, challenges inequality, promotes freedom of expression and an understanding of the variety and depth in human personality. This is the right of all people and not just the prerogative of privileged elites in our society.

1.4 The union movement's commitment to life long education and skilling places a responsibility upon unions to place a strong emphasis on creative activity as a valuable tool to bring the means of personal expression and communication into the workplace and into the leisure and recreational activities of workers and their families.

1.5 Congress declares that there is a continuing need for unions to be active in the cultural and recreational life of the Australian people.

## **2. Objective**

2.1 The objective of the trade union movement's cultural policy is to foster creativity in Australian society, both in work and recreation.

2.2 In pursuit of this objective Congress supports initiatives based on four major principles:

### **1. Cultural Democracy**

Congress believes that cultural activities give people a voice in defining their society and that there must be access and participation in the fullest range of cultural experiences for workers and their families to ensure their right to make an impact on the cultural definition of Australia.

### **2. Workplace Restructuring**

Congress believes that continued restructuring to increase the creative involvement of workers in the

work process will develop worker's skills, enhance job satisfaction and improve the international competitiveness of Australian industry.

### **3. Unionisation**

Congress believes that unionisation of workers in the arts, sport and recreation will advance the interests of workers in those areas.

### **4. Industry Development**

Congress believes that the development of art and design based industries and the employment of creative skills to develop innovative products and techniques are crucial to Australia's future economic success.

## **3. Access and Participation**

### **Public Funding**

3.1 Congress believes that to ensure the highest possible levels of access and participation adequate public funds must be made available.

3.2 Congress calls upon the Federal Government to increase the level of funding for arts and cultural activities and to reverse the decline of the past 15 years of government support in real terms.

3.3 Congress believes that public funding should be committed to Australian production and presentation.

3.4 Emphasis should be placed on programs taking quality production to the community including workplaces programs providing interaction of professional expertise with maximum possible community involvement

The maximum possible independence for those involved free of repressive, bureaucratic administration or censorship. Public funding must be equitably distributed to all fields of practice and sections of the community including the union movement maximum use of Australian creative resources.

3.5 EEO and anti-discrimination principles must apply at all times.

3.6 Public funding must place overwhelming emphasis on programs of activities and institutions where access is

affordable to the whole community

3.7 There should be a substantial increase in support for programs that start from the skills, crafts and interests of the mass of working people and encourage the more profound development of their talents

and appreciation.

### **Major Institutions**

3.8 The union movement notes that most public funding for cultural activities takes place through government supported institutions.

3.9 Congress declares that the union movement should be represented upon the various councils, boards and committees of these institutions by nominees selected by the union movement itself and make representations and submissions based upon the policies of Congress.

3.10 The Executive is charged with ensuring that union representation is as wide as possible.

3.11 Congress calls upon government to fund the arts to a sufficient level to allow artists to earn a living wage from their profession. Congress calls upon all government funding organisations only to fund activities which provide for payment of Award rates and conditions as a minimum.

### **Australia Council**

3.12 Congress believes that the Australia Council should be constituted as democratically as is possible with representatives of practitioners and public organisations including unions. The Council should be given full opportunity of self management and its policies should be binding on its boards and committees.

3.13 Congress calls upon government to restore responsibility for funding of the Australian Opera and Australian Ballet to the Australia Council in order that they be subject to the principles of "arms length funding" and "peer group assessment".

3.14 Congress specifically supports the continuation and expansion of the Art and Working Life Program of the Australia Council. This program, through its union involvement, strives for the extension of cultural access and participation and with other Community Arts Programs and Multicultural Arts Programs represent the Councils' commitment to break down the elitist nature of many art programs. This commitment is crucial to union support of the Council.

## **4. Role of Cultural Workers**

4.1 Congress recognises the importance of cultural workers to the achievement of a democratic culture based upon access and participation.

4.2 Cultural workers are practitioners in industries where vast differences exist in levels of remuneration and conditions of employment. The average income of professional practitioners is extremely low, and this represents a subsidy of cultural services by those workers.

4.3 Congress declares that cultural democracy cannot be built on the basis of exploitation or inequitable conditions for its practitioners.

## **Conditions for Cultural Workers**

4.4 The nature of employment of most cultural workers coupled with high unemployment are responsible for most of the difficulties experienced by cultural workers.

4.5 Congress supports:

- provision of superannuation and child care by funding bodies where it does not currently exist
- development of a long service leave scheme for all cultural workers
- appropriate taxation regimes based upon income averaging
- recognition in law of "moral rights" of artists with respect to protection of their works
- provision in law for *droite du suite* (residual rights) for visual art and crafts
- legislation for performers copyright
- appropriate immigration restrictions on the entry of foreign nationals, particularly in the government subsidised activities
- licensing and regulation of intermediaries and agents
- more flexible access to income support systems
- develop with governments an approach to define "entertainment" with respect to legislation to enhance protection of and opportunities for cultural workers.

## **Industry Development**

4.6 Congress resolves that the ACTU in concert with appropriate affiliates will pursue strategies aimed at creating viable economies for workers in cultural industries.

4.7 Congress supports the current cultural initiative in the Building Industry.

4.8 Congress supports the PSA recommendations for reforms in the music industry and calls upon the government to implement these reforms immediately.

4.9 Congress supports the development of programs which aim to foster product development, innovative uses of technology and worker skills by the placement of artists in industry and the development of the creative skills of workers.

## **Industry Training and Skilling**

4.10 Congress notes that many existing difficulties of industry education, skilling and training in cultural areas are the result of the misallocation of current resources and the nature of most cultural work. Responsibility for the skilling of cultural workers must be taken by the industries utilising those skills.

4.11 Congress supports:

- establishment of reasonable levels of tertiary intakes based upon industry requirements

- reallocation of resources into in-service industry training and other appropriate delivery modes including the provision of training opportunities for workers within the industry
- establishment of bipartite and tripartite bodies to oversee the application of industry levies and other available training funds
- recognition of the labour intensive nature of training of cultural workers
- provision of training with articulated accreditation and allowing maximum participation for cultural workers in providing that training
- appropriate skilling initiatives for unemployed cultural workers that enhances and expands skills in their discipline
- reform of Arts Training Australia to become an effective tripartite industry body.

## **Unionisation**

4.12 Congress believes unionisation of the cultural workers will assist in improving their conditions and calls upon affiliates in the appropriate industries to address this objective without delay.

4.13 The Cultural Committee will work with affiliates with potential membership in cultural, sporting and recreational areas to develop policies and recruitment programs in those areas.

## **5. Unions**

5.1 Congress believes that federal involvement by affiliates should be on an industry basis and calls on affiliates to make available resources to allow the effective development of such programs. Congress commends the Building Unions Cultural Initiative to all affiliates as an example.

5.2 The Cultural Committee should continue to meet regularly to advise the Executive on policies and strategies.

5.3 Each State Branch of the ACTU should create it's own committee including those unions concerned with employment of cultural workers and other appropriate representation.

5.4 All unions should develop an appropriate cultural policy.

5.5 Congress notes the importance of Regional and Provincial Labour Councils in fostering and developing cultural activities and programs. Congress calls for renewed support and funding from State and Federal Governments for the development of regionally based cultural initiatives under the auspices of Labour Councils, joint community and union organisations and unions in workplaces.

### **Union Promotion of Cultural Activities**

5.6 Congress commends existing union cultural programs and initiatives to all State Branches and affiliates.

5.7 Congress believes some of the union movements developing resources should be applied to

cultural programs as both promotions and service to membership.

5.8 Unions should press for public funds for their own use in developing involvement in community programs and carrying out state or national projects.

5.9 Congress calls for a dramatic improvement in the resources available in workplaces for the performance of and participation in creative activities as a necessary adjunct to the restructuring of work practices. Unions should press for these facilities in the normal processes of their work and negotiations.

## **6. Industry**

6.1 Congress calls upon industries to become positively involved in cultural development by providing financial and logistical support for programs specifically aimed at providing greater cultural access and participation for

workers in their respective industries and the development of innovative arts based industries.

## **7. Sport**

7.1 Congress recognises that the all-round development of people requires that sport and recreation be fully

encouraged and adequately funded.

7.2 Congress believes that workplaces should have suitable facilities under joint management and union control and that unions should demand these facilities in negotiations.

7.3 The Cultural Committee will monitor and recommend proposals for union involvement in the promotion and development of sport and recreation.

## **8. Media**

8.1 Congress recognises the cultural dimension of issues relating to the media and instructs the Cultural Committee to continue to provide advice to the Executive on these issues where appropriate.

8.2 Congress recognises that the media and communication sector contains some of the most influential cultural institutions and considers local content regulation must be maintained.

## **9. Heritage**

9.1 Congress recognises the importance of labour history in the cultural heritage of this country. Congress advocates and will support this creation of labour history policies in government and industry. These may include provision of labour history museums, preservation of culturally significant buildings, oral history projects and other appropriate activities.

9.2 Union involvement in development and implementation of labour history policies is considered a prerequisite for ACTU support.